

Three Kings Day

Since the French, German, and Spanish speaking countries celebrate Three Kings Day on January 6th, Elk Ridge Middle School is holding a combined cultural activity that day inviting all the 7th graders to rotate through and learn how the holiday is celebrated in our respective countries. Students will do some kind of activity and then have a sample of some food from the country. We will also give out a brochure of why the kids should take a foreign language to get them ready for registration the first week of February. The activity

In the German section the German 2 students will describe the day and how German's celebrate it. Students will see pictures of people dressed up as one of the wise men going from door to door and seeing a picture of homes with C B M and the year on it to represent that the wise men have come to that home and to give them luck for the next year. Then the 7th grade students will get to eat some pretzels and gummy bears. They will have a coloring contest of a picture of a child dressed as one of the three kings. The top 5 will each get a German candy bar.

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German 2 Student Instructions: Tell the 7th graders in your own words what happens on Three Kings Day. Use the attached photos to help you in your description. When you are done, give the students some gummy bears and pretzels. Hand out the coloring contest form. If you have time before the rotation, let them start coloring it. Tell them to bring the finished product to Mrs. Rizzuto by the end of the day on January 7th. The winners will be announced in the morning announcements and they will get to have a German candy bar as their reward.

Description of the Day in Germany

January 6, the last day of Christmas, comes with its own traditions, rituals and symbols. Carolers are going from house to house; in many homes the Christmas tree is taken down and in some areas is burnt in a big bonfire. For the children this is an especially joyous occasion because, associated with taking down the tree goes the "plündern" (raiding) of the tree. The sweets, chocolate ornaments wrapped in foil or cookies, which have replaced the sugar plums, are the raiders' rewards.

The history of Christmas, (the festival of the nativity of Jesus Christ,) is intertwined with that of the Epiphany. The commemoration of the Baptism (also called the Day of Lights, i.e. the Illumination of Jesus) was also known as the birthday of Jesus, because he was believed to have been born then of the Virgin or reborn in baptism. In some records Christmas and Epiphany were referred to as the first and second nativity; the second being Christ's manifestation to the world.

In the fourth century, December 25 was finally adopted by the Western Christian Church as the date of the Feast of Christ's birth. It is believed that this change in date gave rise to the tradition of the "12 Days of Christmas." While the Western Christian Church celebrates December 25th, the Eastern Christian Church to this day recognizes January 6 as the celebration of the nativity. January 6 was also kept as the physical birthday in Bethlehem. In the Teutonic west, Epiphany became the Festival of the Three Kings (i.e. the Magi), or simply Twelfth day.

On the evening before Three Kings, traditionally there were prayers, blessed dried herbs would be burnt and their aromatic smell would fill the house. Doorways would be sprinkled with holy water and the master of the house would write with chalk C + M + B and the year above the house and barn door and say: "Caspar, Melchior, Balthasar, behütet uns auch für dieses Jahr, vor Feuer und vor Wassergefahr." ("CMB, protect us again this year from the dangers of fire and water.") C + M + B has traditionally been translated with Caspar, Melchior and Balthasar, however, according to the Church it stands for "Christus Mansionem Benedictat" (Christ bless this home). The custom of the Star Singers, reminiscent of the travel of the Three Kings is still very much alive in Bavaria and Austria. Beginning with New Years and through January 6, children dressed as the kings, and holding up a large star, go from door to door, caroling and singing a Three Kings' song. For this they receive money or sweets. Formerly the collected donations went to unemployed craftsmen and veterans, today they go to different charities.

Info found at: <http://www.mrshea.com/germusa/customs/3kings.htm>

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